

A
P R V D E N T
A N D
S E C U R E
C H O Y C E.

Worthy of due Consideration
being a sure Land-mark to all those
who have been tossed to and
fro in these wavering
Times.

Written by H. G. Gent.

Μνημόνευ πίθεν εκπέμπωντες καὶ μεταγόνοντες καὶ
τὰ οἰκτικά τεγα κτίσοντες. Apoc. 2. 9.

*Remember from whence thou art fallen
and Repent, and doe thy first workes.*

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To THE READER.

IT is the garbe of this Age to
guild the out-side with faire
pretences. Yet (courteous Rea-
der) take mee as I am , free from su-
perficiall actions : I have a long time
lived in this Sea of afflictions : and
by these late Tempests have been dri-
ven from my Harbour , to which I
was wonted. I have found my Ship
uncertainte ; the Cable being feeble ;
and in all my search , and that no
short one , I never found a more sure
Pilot , then this *Prudent and Secure
choyce* . Take it , and throughly view
it ; and I doubt not but it will prove
a safe ballast to thee , as I hope it will
to mee ; Containing all the Contro-
versies , most briefly and learnedly , be-

To the Reader.

weene the Church and the Apostate
members. Make it thy owne, and I
doubt not but thou wilt returne
thankes to God. I had thought to
have made a larger Preface ; but that
had beene, to have lighted a candle be-
fore the Sunne, which obscureth the
Starres ; wherefore pardon,

*Thy most affectionate
Friend,*

W. V.

A

A PRUDENT AND
Secure choyce of Beliefc.
TO
HIS DEARE PROTESTANT
FRIEND.

Sr.

SInce it hath pleased God to put a period to the common professed Religion of this Nation, and that by Authoritie of PARLIAMENT; me thinkes you stand at a gaze what to resolve, especially observing what a laughter it hath hatched, never feather'd, untill the destruction thereof. You know that nothing can be of greater importance then the profession of a true Religion, though little apprehended by such as rise no higher then sense can levell, especially in these scandalous confusions, where Truth may seeme more

To his deare Friend.

excusably declined what bath bee[n] my
cleare and peaceable resolution, in the
distempers give mee leave in loue and
friendship, to communicate, by these few
Papers, to your selfe whose Happinesse I
tender as my owne: assured, that if you
peruse them with diligence and sincere
loue of Truth in this more then ever,
you shall experience me,

Your true Friend
and Servant,

H. G.

A



A

PRVIDENT AND SECURE CHOICE.

*

C H A P. I.

The Question stated upon Suppositions prudently not questionable.

I. Suppose first, That our blessed Saviour, being to depart in visible presence from this World, his last care was to leave his Church provided of such as should sufficiently Teach, Governe, and advance it. To whom and their Successors for that purpose, hee promised his espe- ciall assistance and protection to the end of the world. *As my Father sent mee so I send you, Joh. 20. vers. 21. Going into the whole world*

world Preach the Gospell, Mark. 16. Here wee see the Apostles commission not onely to goe as being sent, but also to send others their successors with the like Authority to be successively delivered, since the Apostles, in their owne persons could not goe into the *whole World*. Especially, if by the whole world, wee understand both place, and time to the end thereof. That also he left ample power for the perfect Government of the same Church, that of Saint Math. 28. deserveth especiall consideration : *All power is given to mee in heaven and in earth, going therefore teach all Nations.* Where having said all Power is given to mee, Hee presently practiseth and giveth the like, saying, Going therefore, &c. Moreover, that wee may know nothing is wanting to the perpetuall government of his Church, and that justly it may be assur'd to be directed, not so much by humane industry, as by the Spirit of God, he promised, Job. 14. And I will pray my Father and hee will give you another Comforter, that hee may abide with you for ever, the Spirit of Truth.

2.

It cannot be denied, but these places taken together enforce an ensient, perpetuall, and

and infallible authority of Christ's Church : for they are to be understood as they lye or not, if they are, then there is a Church constantly governing in a Spirit of Truth, even to the end of the World ; if not, what Text is there, that may not maliciously be wrested to a strange sense, by Tongues sounding nothing more sacredly, then Scripture ; witness the times experience.

Thus all Sectaries, though contrary amongst them themselves, avouch for their undoubted warrant holy Scripture ; when it is evident their Proofs are not out of Scripture, but out of their private Judgements. It must then be confessed hard to convince any thing by Scripture alone ; Not for that it containeth not all necessary Truth, and instruction to Salvation, but because following private judgements, wee may erre in the sense thereof.

3.

J suppose there is a Visible Church, *vis. &c.* that beareth the true markes of Christ's *Boughs* promised Providence converting Nations, knowne throughout all the World, renowned for continuall Succession, knit in Unity, adorned with unanimous consent of Doctors in all Nations, maintained by Coun-
cels,

cel; hated by all, though disagreeing Sectaries, beautified with multitudes of Holy men, enriched with glorious Martyrs; finally Professing and teaching all Christian piety; that justly it may be said, *Here is the finger of GOD*; this the light here, God speaketh to the world, in one and the same voyce, by Christ, and his Apostle, and succeeding Church, not dis-joynted by damnable Doctrines: for what Age of men could so conspire with uniforme Contradiction to their venerable Predecessours, and to their owne ruine, imbrace Errours hard to nature? Or, how could a few be so prevalent, as by degrees to seduce the whole World, and that without note? Sooner may the censurers be suspected of mistake, and the Church judged better able to justifie their questioned Doctrines, then these not disproved, to overthrow it.

4.

Fourthly, I suppose, what Truth it selfe denounceth Mark.16. *Hee that will not believe shall be damned.* This sentence doubtlesse extends to all dis-belief of the Gospell sufficiently proposed, for before he said, *going into the World preach the Gospell.* Which is not onely his Resurrection (though it was pronounced

nounced by occasion of doubt made, thereof) but many thinges which hee had to say to them, which then they could not beare away. However no Christian will deny, but the disbelief of Gods word is damnable, and this is sufficient for my present purpose. Hence it followeth, that amongst different Opinions concerning the same Scripture, that part is lesse secure that denyeth, since for Dis-belief, damnation is denounced, ~~not~~ for belief.

5.

Fifthly, I Suppose, as consequent to what is said, That if any Article commonly believed, be judged hard by any private man (and what prime article of Belief is not hard?) It is not secure for him to condemne it, relying only upon humane reason, though joyned with private interpretation of Scripture (for hee may with the same breath deny all Mysteryes) and the most hee can bring is but a shew of Probability not different from Arians and other confessed Herickes: consequently insufficient to disprove the contrary professed Belief, though it be supposed but probably proved out of holy Scripture. But he must produce cleare Scripture; without addition, diminution, supposition, or interpretation; since these are subject to doubt, and

and consequently in danger of leading into dis-beliefc.

6.

Sixthly, for my purpose, I require of Dis-
believers onely, an acknowledgment of a
moral ^{*} Pro-
bability, in the

~~for~~ Here (Reader) mistake not
~~et is can~~ the Author, for whereas in many
~~et Domes~~ places he useth the terme, Pro-
~~ni duc~~ bable, hee taketh them not for
~~frus~~ meere Probabilities, but for in-
~~agres~~ fallible Truths. But giving thee
~~in all~~ the longer end of the staffe, hee
~~points~~ desirereth no more of thee.

ancient Church, consisting of Councels, and Learned men in all parts of the Christian World, agreeing in one, without any alteration evidently proved.

7.

Finally, observe that the Christian world is for the most part divided into Believers and disbelievers : believers rely on Gods eternall Truth, declared by his Church, the most impartiall interpreter of his Word, not looking so much upon the hardaesse of the thing propoſed, as the propoſall ; which if it fayle in one, all may be doubted, if it be ſufficient to warrant one ; it alſo warranteth all, being equally the ſame to all Disbelievers are of divers

divers sorts, pretending Scripture, but according to their private Opinions ; hence it is that they agree in little more then opposing Believers.

8.

These Grounds supposed prudently not questionable : the question is among all Religious, which is securely to be chosen ? J
answer The Auntient believing : because it
must be supposed at least to have Probable
proofes out of Scripture and to containe no
hurt, in which case the Belief is justified. Dis-
believers though their grounds be as probable
as those of the *Arians*, yet they are in danger,
because they ~~do~~ believe; according to this rule
all particular Points controverted are easily
and clearly proved :

For Example.

CHAP. 2.

9. The reall presence of Christ's body and ^{of his} blood in the Sacrament of our Lord's Supper is securely believed, with danger ^{of} greater denied.

To justify this Belief, wee have first the ^{of Corp} words of Christ promising John.6. My ^{over all} flesh is truly meat, and my blood is truly ^{as living} drink in it, ^{it} ^{not, but} ^{which God usse wrought only can} not, inde not in ^{the greatest miseries}

drinke, he that eateth my flesh, &c. He that, contrarie to the Auntient Church, will not believe this of the reall flesh of Christ in the Sacrament, induced by these obscure words, The Spirit giveth life, the flesh profiteth nothing; exposeth himselfe to danger of Disbelieve with the Jewes, and blasphemie; since veri. 56. It is sayd, he that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in mee and I in him. And St. Paul. Colos. 1. Yess which were in times past strangers and enemies, &c. hath bee now reconciled in the body of his flesh, through death, to make you holy: How then can these words, The flesh profiteth nothing, without danger be understood of the flesh of Christ? Is it not profit to us, that Christ dwelleth in us, and wee in him? That wee are reconciled in the body of his flesh?

10.

Secondly, wee have the words of Christ performing: *This is my body, take, eat, doe it to all this, &c.* Which words, if wee wrest from the *real* plaine received, to a figurative sense, wee ~~shall~~ must bring cleere Scripture for it, else our ~~polit~~ interpretation is dangerous, denying so cleare, and high a mystery of Faith, upon humane Motives only.

Thirdly, we have the testimony of St. Paul,

Paul. i Cor. ii. If these places be obscure; we have besides the consent of Nations, for a Thousand five hundred years, without notorious contradiction.

Finally, in Belief and Practice there is no impiety, but praise and honour to Christ, who upon prudent grounds is supposed present, under the fornames of Bread and Wine, after the words of Coniecration pronounced in the person of Christ: he is received with Reverence, love, thankfulness, and lively remembrance of his Sacred passion, &c. For denyall of this Belief, wee have but small Authority, not one cleare testimony of Scripture.

I. I.

Only it may be objected, That if Christ be not under those forms of Bread and Wine, there is danger of Idolatry.

The contrary is manifest ; for Idolatry giveth divine worship to a Creature, choosing such a creature or thing for God ; but Believers adore, not Bread, nor Wine, nor any Creature but Christ, God and Man, whom upon invincible Grounds they suppose present Sacramentally, who in case he were not there, yet Christians adore him, and not the Bread.

Know therefore, that Adoration consisteth of outward reverence, conjoyced with interior as of Body and Soule.

The outward is indifferent to God and
Creatures, the interiour joyned with it, makes
the difference; Exterior reverence applied
by our intention to a temporall Lord, is but
a Civill worship; the same applied by our in-
tentation to a Saint, as a Creature highly in
Gods favour, is a higher degree of honour, then
the former; yet within the limits of Wor-
ship, inferiour to the worship of God.

It is likewise applied by our Intention, to God our Creator and Saviour; thus it is perfect Adoration, due only to God: whence our adorations are distinguished only by our knowledge and esteeme of the object adored.

Hee then that believeth that Christ is contained Sacramentally under the formes of Bread and Wine, may securely adore, since his adoration, proceeding from his Belief, by it selfe transferreth the outward act from all Creatures, and directeth it to God, even in case in his immediate belieif, hee should possibly be supposed mistaken. There remaineth no danger then in the Beleif, but much in the denyall, *Hee that will not believe, &c.*

C H A P. 3.

12. *The Sacrifice of Masse is securely believed, dangerously denied.*

MAsse is a compleate performance of that Command : *Do this in remembrance of mee, Luk.22.* Wherein by the Preist, prayers are said for the Church, the holy Scripture is read : all the parts and Ceremonies thereof represent the life and passion of Christ ; who by meane of those words, pronounced in his Name, *Hoc est corpus meum*, is duly offered in Sacrifice, to the honour of God and profit of his Church. Whence Faith, Gratitude, and love to our Redeemer is daily renewed, and the knowne Prophecy of *Malac. chap.1.* fulfilled ; From the rising of the Sunne, to the going downe of the same, my Name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place a pure oblation is Sacrificed and offered to my Name, according to auncient and common translation. Thus the Church alwayes from the Apostles taught and practiced. Securely I follow it ; It is dangerous to deny it.

*All this I apply to dr. Bayly
as much now in force as ever*

confession of yr

reclavafing
nowe of absolu-

[12]

tion nos C H A P . 4 .

mystery 3. Sacramentall confession and Absolu-
tion nos sa tion are securely practised.

exampt

Here a Christian, after due examination
of his Conscience, with heartly sorrow
for his sinnes, and purpose to amend (which
acts are necessarily required) confesseth his
sins, and expecteth Absolution by the Minis-
try of an approved Priest, what danger can
there be in this ? The *Jewes* charged Christ
of blasphemy, Saying ; *who can forgive
sinnes but God ?* Against Christ they sinned,
first denying him to be God, which sinne hee
chastized by miracle. *Math.9.*

Secondly, not beleeving a Power given
to man to forgive sinnes, this also he bla-
med; And that you may know, that the
Sonne of man hath Authority in earth to for-
give sinnes, &c. And the multitude glorified
God who had given such Authority to men ;
to his Apostles, *John.22.* Hee saith, Receive
ye the holy Ghost, whose sinnes yee remit,
they are remitted to them, whose sinnes yee
retaine they are retained, *Math.18.* What-
soever yee shall bind on earth shall be bound
in heaven, and whatsoever yee shall loose
on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.

Question-

Questionless, the prime sense of these ~~words imports a power given to men to forgive sinnes; nothing then is presumptuously believed but received as a mercifull priviledge, left by Christ to his dearly redeemed Church.~~

In opposition, I find no Scripture; but only admirations of a few deniers in comparison of the Believers, though they deny not, but temporall Princes may give Commission to subjects, to forgive Treasons against themselves dangerous then is their deniall.

CHAP. 5.

Securely wee beleive one Church, under one Head thereof.

14. **N**ecessarie it is, in one Family one Master, in one City one Major, in one Company one Captaine, in one Army one Generall, in one Common-wealth one State, in one Kingdome one King. And can it beare any colour of offence, to believe that in the most perfect Common-wealth, instituted by Christ, there should be one flock under one Pastor? *ut fiat unus ovile et unus Pastor.* Where there are two, not subordinate Governments, there is not one Common-

wealth, and two peaceable governing Kings, argue two Kingdomes, where then in Christians wee find divers Spirituall governments, not subordinate; wee must acknowledge divers Churches, yet wee all say in one *Creed*, delivered by the Apostles, conformable to what Christ promised, *I believe the holy Catholique Church*. Not one if not subordinate to one visible head, who as hee ordained a visible Church, so hee ordained a visible Pastor. That there may be made one flocke and one Pastor. Necessary for the preseruation of Unity, and decent Conformity, without which no Common-wealth is permanent.

15.

I find this no where verified but in the successors of Peter, and the Church adhering to them, cleerely promised, *Math. 16. vers.8. Thou art Peter, and upon this rocke will I build my Church, and the Gates of Hell shall not prevale against it.*

Behold one rocke, one Church, and that permanent, against all assaults: now knowne by its singular Constancy, in the middest of continuall assaults, *John. 21.* To Peter Christ said, *Feed my sheepe*; which words imply the office of a Pastor; that is, not onely

to provide nourishment, but also to Governe and defend, without which it were not compleat.

That also these words were spoken to ~~say to~~ ^{wt 1} Peter only, and consequently only to his successors; It is manifest by that three-fold Interrogation, *Simon Peter louest thou mee?* ~~say to~~ ^{one} Especially when hee added, More then these. ~~all are~~ ^{all are} Whereby he excluded the rest of his Apostles. ~~say to~~ ^{all are} To which when Saint Peter had answered, ~~say to~~ ^{wt 2} that he loued him. Christ replyed to him singularly; *Feed my sheepe.* That is, the supreme dignity of Pastorship and Vicegerency ~~say to~~ ^{I give you}, requireth a singular love, and as you love mee, so be a true Pastor in my Church.

Grant that by probable arguments all said may appeare not evident, I will not dispute it; yet the common voyce of the World so long continued, expressed also in the *Creeds*, may justifie the Believers of one, holy Catholique, and Apostolique Church: and not one, unlesse in one belief under one supreme visible Goverour; whom such as reject out of a perswasion, that they need none, but Christ; make many Churches disagreeing in confused Beliefes, every one equally challenging C H R I S T for their Goverour;

securely then one Church under one visible
Pastor is believed, but with danger denied:
Hee that will not beleive the Catholique
Church, hee that heareth you heareth mee, he
that despiseth you despiseth mee &c.

CHAP. 6.

16. Securely we commend our selves to
the intercession of Saints.

sent, this difficultie is vaine, since we know not how our soule understands, nor how our eyes see, or eares heare; What hindereth then, but that securely I may believe it.

C H A P. 7.

17. *What is Secure concerning the making and worshipping of Images.*

For a safe resolution in this Point, it is ~~thi~~
necessary. ~~to~~

First, to declare, what manner of Worship ~~act~~
is pretended due to Images; and for Example, ~~et comp~~ I will discourse of the Image of ~~exaudi~~
C H R I S T Crucified, whereby it will appear, what with proportion may be said ~~of~~
of the rest. The Worship then pretended
lawfull, tendeth not to the Image, out of ~~his appre~~
apprehension of Divinity therein contained, ~~giving~~
but onely out of a Faith in C H R I S T, re-
presented and imagined to us by that Image, ~~com. w~~
that is, believing C H R I S T represented by ~~ey~~
it in manner as the once Visibly appeared, ~~our~~
worthy of all honour, which by his I-
mage, as his representative, I give him;
Whence evident it is. First, that by such
worship C H R I S T is immediately worship-
ped;

ped; that is, for Himself, and his Picture ~~only~~ for him, both morally one object of the worship.

Secondly, that no honour due to G O D is transferred to a Creature, since God is ~~only~~ truly Worshipped for himself, and no Creature religiously worshipped, but for G O D.

Thirdly, that whatsoever honour exterior or interior, tendeth toward the Image, is not for it, nor resteth there (as in case of Idolatry) but by our Faith, and interior reverence is transferred to C H R I S T, for whom and to whom it is exhibited.

Since therefore perfect Worship consisteth both in interior, and exterior acts conjoined; the interior giving life, and the very being of worship to the exterior, the interior respecting Christ for himself, and the Image, ~~only~~ for C H R I S T; Image-worship differeth infinitely from Idolatry. In a word, the worship here in question, is only an outward honour toward the Image, proceeding from an outward reverence to C H R I S T represented. As St. Mary Magdalene worshipped Christ as Man, out of a belief of the Divinity in him, or rather as some worship their Communion for the relation

lation it hath to CHRIST, by their Belief: So in like manner, worship given to Images, is for the connexion they have with Christ himselfe.

The Question then is, whether the worship of Images thus understood, bee lawfull?

18. According to the new Translation of our English Bibles, the negative part against the Believers seemeth justified, Exod. 20. Expressly forbidding both making and worshipping any Image whatsoever.

But this Translation is evidently false, unless it meane Images with relation to Idolatry; For in the Law, what is forbidden to be worshipped, is also forbidden to bee made. *Thou shalt not make to thy selfe, nor any thing that may be worshipped*: But the Law forbiddeth not Images to be made, as it appeareth by the Images in the Temple, and Cherubims over the Ark, the brazen Serpent, Numb. 21. Kings 1st. Chap. 6. vers. 23, 27, 29. (according to the English translation) Lyons, Oxen, &c. 1 Kings, chap. 7. vers. 29. Then likewise, it forbiddeth not Image-worship. *Image* then is a false Translation, unless it be understood

stood with relation to Idolatry, then it maketh nothing against the use of Images declared.

Moreover, wee have manifest warrant in
holy Scripture, both for the making and
worshipping of Images, not reconcileable
with the Law, if understood as the new
Translations import.

The Prophet David teacheth, Adore the
foot-stoole of our Lord, for hee is holy. Was
not the Arke a creature ? Yet because God
is holy, whose foot-stoole it was, it was jud-
ged worthy to be worshipped.

we fall Joshua chap. 7. Fell prostrate before the
Arke : what did hee lesse then is required in
the worship of Images ? Or did he breake
Gods Command ?

Wee read, Exod. 3. 28. Genes. 18. Jos. 5.
14. Apoc. 5. and in other places, How the
holy Prophets adored GOD in Images, or in
Angels representing his Person, prostrating
themselves before them, and though their
intention was directed to God ; yet their
outward act of worship was directed to those
sensible apparitions, or Images representing
God to their Imaginations ; wherein they
conceived God as represented, and those I-
mages representing God morally one object,
whereby ch. over such things in
order to him, Gen. 18 Abram bowed
with respect his, nor prostrated that
in a certain place

in the same manner ; as it happeneth in the honour of Images , and in the worship of the figurative Communion.

19.

Finally, it is manifest, by the end of the Law ; that Idolatry, not Image-worship is forbidden ; which was, that the honour of G O D should bee unviolably kept, by giving Divine worship onely to him : Therefore in the beginning hee said, *I am thy Lord God, thou shalt have no other Gods before me.* The reason alio hee added, why they should make no Idols ; *For I am thy Lord God, a jealous God ;* That is, make to thy selfe nothing for thy G O D ; for *I am thy God.*

Images, I have proved were Commanded ; therefore Images as declared, oppose not Gods honour , consequently are not forbidden , else wee must prove a manifest contradiction in the Law. Thus the received use of Images is justified , and not to bee cryed downe by new Dis-believers , whose danger is apparent , untill they bring evident proofes.

It may be objected, that since Idolatry hath beene begun , and maintained by Images ; and since men are prone to apply them-

themselves most to Corporall objects, the secure way is to abandon Jimages, at the least in Churches.

This is spoken without Law or reason: Law there can be none brought, since, not Jimages, but Jdols, were the beginning of J-dolatry. Jimages J have proved warrantable in holy Scripture.

Nor Reason; for whereas an Jdoll representeth nothing besides it selfe, and so is worshipp'd without any farther relation; an Jimage representeth a true object, distinct from it selfe; therefore moveth a man to a reverence, proportionable to the object represented.

Whence in reason, an Jdoll occasioneth Jdolatry, not representing any farther object, whether our thoughts and honour may be transferred; when an Jimage of a true object, necessarily draweth our minds and reverence to something besides it selfe. So that aske any simple Believer, whether hee pray to the Jimage, or put any confidence in it, he will answer, No. Aske him againe, when he is kneeling before a Picture, with his eyes fixed on it, whether he directeth his Prayer? He will answer to God, or sonie Saint represented, whose intercession heo desireth.

What

What hurt is in this?

St. Mary Magdalen prostrated her selfe, kissed and bathed with her teares the feet of CHRIST, what justified that act? But the union which those Sacred feet have with his Divinity, which yet she saw not, but apprehended by Faith? Though betweene Christ and his Picture, there be not so immediate, yet there is a morall connexion sufficient to termine one morall act of Adoration. Securely then J honour CHRIST and his Image as one morall object; therefore cannot dishonour the Picture without danger of dishonouring the Prototypon.

CHAP. 8.

20. *The like security is shewed in all other Articles believed in generall.*

VV Ho can doubt, but that Purgatory, Free-will, Merit of good workes, by the grace of God; Tradition, Indulgences, &c. are probably proved by Believers; That also the Belief containeth no hurt; securely then they are believed. Probability also is the most Disbelievers can challenge; probabilit
merit
ex won
ouerso unsuffi-

unſufficient to ſecure them, ſince the contra-
ry may be true and obliging to Belief;
for though they produce ſeeming places of
Scripture, obscure Authority of auntient Fa-
thers, endleſſe reaſonings, and diſputes;
ſatisfactory to few, they can convince no
more, even in their owne judgements, then
a ſhew of Probability, which all, though
contradictorу, equally pretend.

If then there appeare no harme, but pro-
bability in the Belief, Disbelievers are in
danger, being nearer to that ſentencē. *Hee
that will not Believe ſhall bee condem-
ned.*

Wherefore, if any endeavour to diſprove
any ſuch Point of belief, by Scripture,
Reason, or Authority; unleſſe they bee ſo
evident that they ſuffer no Interpretation,
or ſolution (which is not poſſible) I reject
them as impertinent, and proving an in-
ſufficient Probability, which to prevent end-
leſſe Contention I grant, and the moſt that
can be expected. But withall askes, whe-
ther they can deny, but that the contrary
Belief is apparently proved by great Au-
thority, and probable places of Scripture:
they muſt grant it.

Whence it muſt needs follow, That to
Believe

Believe is secure, and to deny is evidently dangerous.

Hence that Security which some pretend is manifestly proved to be vaine.

They say, God obligeth not men to impossibilities, since then at least, the vulgar sort of people cannot discerne those differences wherein Learned men disagree; each one may securely rest in that hee hath beeene taught, believing his *Creed, &c.*

If wee rely onely upon Arguments out of Scripture, the probability of the Believer is onely Secure, which is evident notwithstanding the disputable Differences bee not discernable; for who cannot discerne a difference betweene Believing and Disbelieving, which though they have equall arguments, yet they cannot bee equally Secure; Probability onely securing Belief.

But that discourse cleerly convinceth the necessity of a Church, as a living rule; For God obligeth us not to impossibilities, but it is impossible for many to judge betweene the monstrous differences of private mens interpretations of Gods word; Therefore hee obligeth us not to the belief of his Word upon that accompt: but hath provided a

Church, which for that end hee protecteth, as is before shewed, *Numb. 1. 3.* Which we professe to Believe, when wee say; *I believe the holy Catholique Church*: Suffici-
ent as *I* will prove to guide us in our Be-
liefe, if there had beene no Scripture writ-
ten.

C H A P. 9.

*Grant to Disbelievers probability of
Reason, yet their danger is
certaine.*

12. **S**ome may think that this discourse prooveth Believers secure, but not that Disbelievers are in danger, if they be ruled according to the meanes and capaci-
ty **G O D** hath given them, and that such are not obstinate deniers of Truth, conse-
quently secure.

J grant that invincible Ignorance may ex-
-cuse disbelievers, as such, from sinne; yet it followeth not that finall Disbeliefe (though invincible) can consist with grace necessary to Salvation; but this *I* dispute not, nor against these; but such as doe or
may

may discerne a difference betweene Belief and Disbelief, and who may see, that the grounds of Belief are at least probable, and the practice harmlesse.

Notwithstanding, adventure upon the denying part, moved only by the same motives, which they must suppose in confessed Heretickes. Or, let any one define what Disbelievers may be guilty, hee shall either conclude these Disbelievers J speake of, or else acknowledge that there never have been any.

22.

Againe, it may bee urged, that if the Belief be supposed probably true, then the denyall is also Probable, then not damnable. J say the Belief is not only probably proved; but out of the undeniable Probabilitie, J shew it is sufficient to prove the Belief secure, which cannot bee in the Disbelief, though it be supposed to have Probability of arguments.

The difference is, because in the things believed, there appeareth no hurt, and in case they bee mistaken, Probability may justify their consent, especially appearing greater then the contrary.

C 2

But

But Disbelieving upon probable seeming grounds (and what Heritique did not thinke hee had probable grounds ?) leaveth the disbeliever in certaine danger of denying Christ his Word.

First, because his danger is certaine, in the same degree, as the *Belief* is supposed probably proved : but the *Belief* is manifestly supposed to bee, at least, Probably proved.

Therefore the Disbelievers danger is manifest.

You will deny the first Proposition ; because GOD obligeth us not to the Belief of controverted Points, though the one side bee true ; but you must consider, who they be that breed the Controversie, and against what Authority ; For if every thing that is controverted, is not obligatory, it may be proved wee are obliged to believe scarce any thing : Or, can it be imagined, that CHRIST leaving so strict a Command of Belief, would have the execution of it, depend upon Probabilities of dispute ? Manifest it is, that the Scriptures are hard. Manifest it is, hee left a Church to direct us, manifest also, is his Command. Then manifest also it is, that

private

private disputes cannot discharge our obligation to Belief. See *Numb. 25.*

Secondly, the Disbelief is as certainly dangerous, as it is certainly not evident (and more evidence is required to free the disbelief from danger then is necessary to free the Belief) but the disbelief is certainly not evident; Therefore, it is certainly dangerous.

The first Proposition is cleare; for if there bee not evidence, the contrary may be true, obliging to Belief: That also the disbelief is not evident, appeareth by its Novelty, Inconstancy, disagreements (for there is scarce any Point of Belief but some disbeliever or other assenteth to it) and strong opposition it hath. Neyther can the want of evidence in the Articles believed warrant the disbelievers, who may observe a greater probability for the Belief, else who could believe? Or rather, who could be charged of Heresie? However, it is without question, that if Probability excuse Disbelievers, much more it will justify Believers: Who then would not be secure?

23.

It followeth, that although Disbelievers

C 3

frame

frame to themselves a probable judgement, yet their danger is certaine, because the contrary Belief is doubtlesse probably proved; which may convince them, that they leave the secure Belief, wherein there can bee no danger, and choose that part, where on C H R I S T's denunciation doth fall: and danger knowne breedeth an obligation to a farther inquiry, and removeth such ignorance, which alone can excuse errour in Belief.

It may bee replied, that where there is Probability of the disbelief, it is not faulty; because then Gods word is not manifest, consequently no injury to God, not to beleive it.

If Probability in disbelief excuse from fault, *Jewes, Arians, &c.* are excused; for they have a probability at least, that is, an esteeme and liking of their private grounds (in theif Judgements probable) and since such Probabilities may bee found against any point of Faith, none can be obliged to believē.

I confess, that standing in the Probability conceived, a man denyeth not to believe Gods word, which then he doth not know

to bee his Word, if his Ignorance bee invincible; yet because hee cannot but know that the Belief is as probably proposed, as Commanded, hee is obliged to a higher search, which certainly will bring him to more evidence of his danger and security of that his Belief, by observation of a greater probability in the Belief, which hereafter Numb. 26, 27. and 30. I will prove to bee an invincible argument of Truth in point of Faith.

Disbelievers finally flatter thamselfes, that they believe GOD's word, and deny only what they find not contained in holy Scripture.

But first, they must know what is Gods word, before they believe it; they take not the way to know it, by interpreting Scriptures, according to private Judgement, but by looking upon the rule God hath left to the world,

for nihil ad nos

C H A P. 10.

A Rule is necessary to shew what is to bee Believed.

^{videlicet} 24. **H**itherto I have proved Belief secure; Disbelief dangerous, standing only upon private Interpretation of ~~word~~ Scripture; Prudence moving me to choose that part, which is most remote from danger of CHRIST's sentence.

Now since the obligation of CHRIST'S Command depends not upon Probabilities, I will in these Differences arising from diversity of Wit, shew a necessity of a common Rule, without which Experience sheweth there is no agreement amongst Christians, no Constancy, no true Faith; because resolved no higher than into private Judgement, which alone maketh Disbelief unexcusable, though it have never so seeming probability.

God commandeth a belief of his Word under paine of Damnation; therefore must bee supposed to manifest to men, what is his Word, otherwise how can they be obliged to believe it?

But

But hee doth not manifest, which is his Word, especially in controverted Points, by holy Scripture, or private Spirit; therefore some other rule must bee supposed.

Private Spirit is not sufficient, because it is not universall, leading to Unity, but multiplied with Contradiction, not discernable amongst so many disagreeing Spirits, which is the true: and who can maintaine his own meaning, only true; and the rest false?

Moreover, a Rule is supposed a common and Secure direction, else no Rule; which with a private Spirit implyeth a contradiction, private Spirits being but private directions; and so private, that it is not knowne wherein they agree; for to one it teacheth one point of Belief, and denyeth the rest; To another it teacheth another Point, and denyeth the rest; to a third it teacheth another, and likewise denyeth the rest, &c. So that by some Spirit or other, every point of Belief is taught, and every Point denied: How then is it a Rule?

Scripture also is unsufficient to declare its owne fence, as appeareth by the great difference amongst Interpreters left to their owne judgements, and contradictory Religions framed.

framed thereby ; when some must needs bee deceived of their so assured Sense ; and who they are who can sufficiently prove by Scripture alone ?

It is evident, that the presumptuous confidence of the sufficiency and cleernes of Scriptures alone, hath caused these experienced Confusions and will maintaine them, if It bee not layd aside.

And prodigious is the blindness which feeth it not. For one may truly say, there is nothing in the World, that more divideth Schollers and Common-wealths into monstrous differences, then the sense of Scriptures, left to private Judgements ; when every mans judgement is left free to guesse what hee pleaseth ; that looking this way onely, no man can find any assurance of what we are to Believe ; What wonder then, if wee have so many contradictory Doctors : Every one the sole true understander of Gods word ? Sole true impugner of Belief ? Every one disproving one Article, and proving another ? Whence all Belief is proved, and every Article disproved by their unfallible Rule, an evident argument of the insufficiency of this course, and that the

the Scripture doth not declare it selfe ; therefore it can bee no Rule , to determine contradictory Opinions of the sense of the same, consequently of it selfe , not sufficient what is Gods word.

25.

I declare it evidently ; for there is scarce any point of Believe, but some disbeliever or other finds it in Scripture , then by their rule, they eyther prove all points of Faith , or that Scripture is no Rule. For amongst them they find out almost all wee believe , in their undoubted Rule ; yet looking upon one anothers disagreements , they must say, It is no Rule : The same Scripture regulating to them every point of Believe, and the same regulating their disbelief in all : Which of these shall the World follow ?

Finally, It is as cleare , that resting upon private Interpretations of holy Scripture no high mysterie can oblige to Believe ; because being subject to Controversies , Probability must bee supposed upon all sides ; and why not in one as well as in another ? Then they doe not appear Divine revelations , consequently they oblige not to Believe , if then probable arguments against Believe be sufficient

cient to excuse the Disbelief, all disbelief is excusable, consequently no Faith obligeth; another Rule then is necessary.

The texts inducing to this confidence are weake: *You shall not add a Word*, Deut. 4. *Search the Scriptures*, Joh. 5. *These things are written that you may Believe*, Joh. 20. All Scripture divinely inspired is profitable: They prove as much against the Primitive Church, which doubtlesse was an infallible Rule, and could not cease by the access of Scriptures. Neyther doe these Places say, that all is written which C H R I S T taught, or that what is written is divine Scripture, or that it needeth no Interpreter, especially not a Church, but a private Spirit onely.

But now wee seeme to deny with the same danger.

Wee deny not any sufficiency on the part of holy Scripture for it is the undoubted Word of G O D, left to the interpretation of his Church. But only we deny the sufficiency of our unamanerly Judgements that presume too high.

A Rule then is necessary to fulfill Gods Command, since hee doth not command a saying

saving Belief, and leave us so unassured of his Word.

C H A P. II.

*The onely unfallible Rule to know
Gods word.*

26. **I**S the Church holy, Apostolically, not hindered in her Continuance, nor disproved in her Doctrine, which remaineth incorrupt, Though the gates of Hell (as was fore-told) breath forth malice at all times against it.

Of this the holy Scripture giveth cleare testimony, *Math. ult. Teach all Nations, behold I am with you every day even to the end of the World.*

Math. 18.17. If bee shall not heare the Church, let him bee to thee as a Heathen and Publican.

Luk. 10.16. Hee that heareth you, heareth mee, and hee that contemneth you contemneth mee.

Besides, the Church is called, *Math. 5. The light of the World.* *Timm. 3.15. A pillar and firmament of Truth.* These texts sufficiently prove a living and infallible Rule.

Then

Then you will say, The Scripture is the Rule whereby to know the Church, consequently the onely rule of all Belief.

True it is, The Church and Scripture give mutuall evidence of one another : yet the first Rule by which wee knew both Scripture and the sense thereof, is onely the Church : How then doe wee know the Church ?

As the Apostles and Disciples knew CHRIST, by the Testimonies, from God of his Mission ; and as succeeding Ages knew their Predecessors even till this time, by the providence of God, without interruption, never disproved ; otherwise there can be no true sense made of CHRIST's Promises of teaching all Nations, of being with it every day to the consummation of the World ; of all being obliged to heare it ; of being a firmament of Truth and light of the world. That were there no Scripture ; as CHRIST was, and his Primitive Church was ; so likewise in their Successours, the same Church, even till the Worlds end, is an infallible Rule to know what is to bee Believed, untill it be evidently proved ; what Age first began to conspire against their Teachers,

Teachers, by devising damnable Errors, hard even to reason and sense, without encountering any publique Opposers, even till these last Hundred yeares, or thereabout; and without this Church wee could not be assured of holy Scriptures.

Certainly there is not any greater prooef of Gods word, nor flaw of his Providence, nor clearer meanes to discide Controversies, than the believing Church wee speake of.

What Authority can compare with it! the Disbelievers only because it confounded their hardnessse of Belief, were forced to that poore shift of adhering to a Church invisible.

If this bee not evident, yet it is manifest that there is no motive of disbeliefe comparable to it. See *Numb. 3.26.* Hence I prove the Church to bee the onely unsallible Rule whereby to know what is to be believed. GOD commanding Belief under paine of damnation, must bee supposed to declare sufficiently what is to be believed: But if the Church bee not a sufficient rule, GOD doth not sufficiently declare to the world what is to bee believed: Therefore we must confess the Church to be the sufficient Rule consequently infallible. The

The first Proposition is undoubted. The second evident, I have shewed *Chapter 10.* That the Scripture is no sufficient Rule to determine the sense thereof, private Spirit is also uncertainte and not knowne, as I shewed, *Numb. 24.* It followeth then, that eyther the Church mast bee the Rule, or that we have no rule.

Moreover, who will have the Scripture the rule, meate, as it is interpreted by themselves, not as it is Interpreted by the Church.

J aske them? Doth their wit lead them to the true Sense? Or the bare Word? Or, both? If the first, then their Wit is the rule: If the second, why doth not the bare Word regulate all sincere understandings, or how could the whole auntient Church be so blind, as not to see it, if it erred as Disbelievers suppose? If both; J aske againe: Whether the Authority of some in this last Age disagreeing in their pretended Rule, and granting it to teach almost every particular Doctrine they deny, can bee prudently esteemed comparable to the consent of an Auntient Church, interpreting Scriptures uniformly, never yet evidently disproved, nor question-

questioned for dissenting from the Primitive,
till of late.

27.

*Hence againe, I prove the Church the
only Rule whereby wee know what is to be
Believèd.*

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That must be supposed to be the Rule, which is the most probable Proposall ; but the Church is the more probable proposall ; Therefore it is the Rule.

The first Proposition is manifest , for where GOD commands Belief , hec cannot permit the contrary Errour to be proposed with greater Probabilitie.

That the Church is the more probable Proposall, hath all proofes , except only its Adversaries denyall : what Authority, Sanctity, Antiquity, extent, and Unity is comparable to it ?

If you aske here , whether the Wit of men bee the rule in the Church ; I answer, That the Church guided by the Spirit of G O D, is the rule.

How doe I know this ? By the Church it selfe , indued with such marks and tokens of

D

Gods

Gods presence in it, that prudently I cannot doubt it. See *Numb. 3.*

The *Jewes* Law was to continue but untill the Comming of the *M E S S I A S*, yet in respect of the great Authority thereof, *C H R I S T* held them excusable adhering to their Law, and denying himself to bee the *Messias*; had hee not wrought such Miracles, as no man ever wrought.

No wonder then, if the Church be a rule to Christian belief, untill God worke Miracles to disprove it.

And of what nature had they need to bee?

Disbelievers will tell you; They are the Church.

The new Church of Disbelief, not the auntient believing Church: They cannot bee of the Church, and by Disbelieving fight against the Church, which consisteth of Believers.

Their first and onely contention with the Church was because it Believed, and they could not understand how. Yet they could never prove, when the Church first devi-
sed

fed that Belief; wherefore leaving it, they left also the Primitive Church, though, in words onely, they pretend to follow it.

Securely and prudently such a Rule is believed, with danger denied; maugre all shew of Reason to the contrary, since it can bee but in shew Probable.

C H A P. 12.

Hee that leaveth this Rule is in evident danger.

28. **I**T cannot bee denied, but that it is Prudence to rely on such a Church, believing it, rather then any private Wits or reason denying; therefore Secure.

It is evident also, that there is no other Rule, as I shewed *Chapter 10.* Then to forsake this Rule is to runne into danger of errors in Belief, this also is proved, *Numb.*

24.

You say, the Church hath erred; therefore is not to bee looked upon as a Rule.

D 2

What

What then ? Are you sure none will say, that the Scriptures have been corrupted ? Grant they have not, yet who can bee assured, that hee only understandeth them ?

In the Church protected by C H R I S T, you will suppose Errors without proofe ; because you will have no Rule to containe your judgement within the bonds of Humilitie, but you can produce no evident proofe as you must confessie.

Your calling some Scriptures in question, your Interpretations of others, your questions how ? Your moderne disagreeing Doctours, your obscurities out of Antiquity, which is all you can bring ; are but the fruits of Wit, and argue even in your owne Judgements, but a Probability against the former received Articles, invincibly credibile.

First, Because the auntient and onely knowne Church hath constantly proved them, by an Uniforme interpretation of holy Scriptures, more prevalent than any new Authoritie can bee to the contrary.

Secondly,

2.

Secondly, If they were devised since the Primitive Church, it is not possible but it would have beene Recorded by many, or some antient Writers: They being Articles, hard and of highest concernment.

3.

Thirdly, why shall the judgement of a few Denyers condemne a Belief, delivered by the same Scripture, interpreted by the same Church, as all other Articles were.

29.

BY these Prooves well pondered, those supposed Errours will appeare objects of a Christian beliefe invincibly Prudent, and they evidently credible: First declared, not by a Parliament, but by Generall Councells, not in one Kingdome but in many; not by a few dis-agreeing, but by a Consonant voyce throughout all Parts and

D 3

times

*not this is it from
the church*

[46]

times of the Christian world ; what more Credible ? Then no Errors, then no markes of an apostating Church.

The Church then remaines a Rule, this is at least Probable ; then dangerous to forsake it ; Least hee that hateth it, hateth **CHRIST.**

30.

Because all that will not Believe what **CHRIST** most prudently appeareth to bee **CHRIST**'s word, are in danger of denying **CHRIST**'s word.

But such are the forsakers of this Rule ; therefore they are in danger, &c.

The major is proved ; because **CHRIST** cannot bee supposed to command Belief, and permit the most prudent motives to Errour.

The minor is certaine ; because the forsakers of this Rule have no other, nor Church antienter then themselves, to warrant their Inventions.

The Church then remaineth not manifestly blemished ; then not convinced to differ from the Primitive : Then the onely

Catho-

Catholique, then the deliverer of GOD's Word, then a Secure rule; dangerous then to forsake it.

If all this bee not evident; it is at least Probably proved, and free from harme.

Securely then believed, dangerously denied; Since the authority of the Church must appeare more prevalent to justifie those Articles (pretended Errors) then Wit of man to blemish it by them.

The Conclusion.

31.

Thus have I shewed the Securitie of Believers probably, at least, conformable to CHRIST's word: The danger also of Disbelievers, contemning the Authority of an antient Church, and as yet not convicted of Corruption in Faith, nor so much as charged by any authority greater than it

it selfe; but such as regenerate by her in C H R I S T, did forsake her for liberty of life and Belief. Hee that dispiseth it dispiseth C H R I S T: Who will not heare the Church, let him bee reputed as a Heathen and a Publican. And choosing the disbelieving part out of seeming Reasons, exposing themselves to needlesse danger of that Sentence, who will not believe shall bee condemned. For if the contrary Belief must bee supposed, at the least, Probable, then the Disbelief may bee a faulty denyall of C H R I S T s word; consequently, it may deserve damnation. This is evident to reason.

Moreover, since G O D hath commanded a belief of his Gospell, I have shewed by Reason and evident Experience of the infinite contradiction of Interpreters, left to their owne private judgements or Spirits, an absolute necessity of some living Rule; and

and that no other can bee imagined than the Antient, believing, undis-
proved Church, against which all Arguments that wit can produce ; if they be not clearly evident, and beyond the degree of Probability (to which purpose it will bee necessary to dis-
prove evidently all the proofes the said Church hath) they are unsuffi-
cient to overthrow an antient received Church, declaring and proving the contrary ever since the first Instituti-
on thereof.

Who then seeth not, how much it concerneth a Christian not rashly to deny what is delivered by an antient Church ?

Upon true belief Gods favour de-
pendeth, on this Eternall welfare ; wee expect but one Death, one irre-
vocable Judgement, one eternity of Happinesse, or Misery : This is the effect of Disbelief ; That is promised to Believers.

Shall a Christian adventure upon such extremities with seeming Probabilities, and leave Security ? Belief is secure veyd of harme. But to Disbelievers it is said, Who will not believe shall bee damned.

Graviter peccat (saith St. August. cap. de Baptis.) qui in rebus ad Salutem animæ pertinentibus certis incerta præponit. Heavie is his sinne who in matters concerning the safety of his Soule, preferreth uncertaine meanes before certaine.

Read and consider.

Farewell.

F J N J S.

Errata.

Courteous reader, besides many flippes, I desire
you in the 2, Epistle, line 15. to reade for the
these. pag. 3. l. 9, for the, theſc. & the 11, leave out
them, line 21. put in Secondly, p. 4, for fourthly,
thirdly, &c, p. 7, for religious, religions, p. 11, l.
8, for duly, daily, p. 12, l. 2, for heatly, heavy, p.
14, l. 15. read permanent, l. 10, for 8. put 18. p.
15, l. 20, insert two, before *creeds*, p. 17. l. 18, for
the read hee, p. 19. l. 11 for is it, p. 20. l. 18. for
28, 24, p. 26, l. 8. for 12, 21, pa. 25, l. 4, insert, to
ſhew pa. 26, l. 22, insert issue, p. 39, for (ſee
number, 3, and the 26) ſee num, 3, pag. 45, l. 15,
put out first:
